



# STATE OF THE RIVER 2001

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## RIVER PROFILE

The Hudson River is one of America’s most important commercial and recreational waterways, and one of the jewels of New York State. The Hudson was the first great river that settlers encountered in the New World, and it has been central to America’s identity ever since. The Hudson first connected the nations of the Iroquois, Algonquians and Mohicans and young America to the west. The Hudson River Valley is where the course of the Revolutionary War was changed forever, and America’s love of its landscape was born. Seven generations of farmers have tilled the fields along the Hudson River and preserved its open spaces. The commercial lifeblood of the nation sailed up the Hudson and westward along the Erie Canal. At Ellis Island, America welcomed the immigrants that supplied its diversity and strength. From the docks and piers of Manhattan’s West Side, the sons and daughters of those immigrants sailed to defend our freedom in two world wars.

The Hudson is one of America’s great environmental success stories – a symbol of what government and people can do by working together. The modern environmental movement was born in the Hudson Valley with the judicial decision on Storm King that established the precedent for the National Environmental Policy Act. It was on the Hudson that the idea of having a Riverkeeper – a watchdog for environmental disturbance – developed; this concept has since been embraced across the country. Similarly, the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater became a symbol copied by river groups nationwide. These efforts are the culmination of 100 years of conservation.

Today, the Hudson is recognized as an estuary of national importance. The Hudson River is a recreational corridor for boating, swimming, fishing and transportation. It is an economic success story as well, of new business and industry, productive agriculture, and waterfront communities springing back to life. The historic, environmental and economic significance of this River make it an ideal setting for an institute devoted to research on the problems faced by rivers and estuaries around the world, as New York Governor George Pataki has envisioned. The State is now in the process of siting and endowing this new Rivers and Estuaries Center on the Hudson; groundbreaking will occur later this year.



Under the direction of Governor Pataki, New York State is devoting unprecedented resources to the restoration and protection of the Hudson River and the revitalization of the waterfront communities that depend upon it. The American Heritage Rivers Initiative complements the State’s efforts through the programs of many New York State agencies. The Initiative also builds upon other Federal-State partnerships such as the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program; the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area; and the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Through these programs and the American Heritage Rivers Initiative, in partnership with Hudson River Valley communities and citizen groups, New York’s vision of a river connected by well-planned communities, restored and accessible natural resources and revitalized waterfronts will be realized.

## American Heritage Rivers Initiative and the Hudson River

For generations, New Yorkers have sought State and Federal action to protect and restore the Hudson River. New York State heard their demands and adopted a comprehensive program to guide State management of the River. Governor Pataki's efforts to secure the designation of the Hudson as an American Heritage River furthered the State's efforts by effectively coordinating State, Federal and local programs to remove pollutants; restore degraded wetlands; protect fragile habitats; revitalize community waterfronts; protect and rehabilitate historic structures; stimulate cultural activity; and provide public access to one of America's greatest natural resources.

New York has embarked upon a visionary effort to integrate environmental restoration and economic revitalization in Hudson River communities; Federal assistance provides a critical helping hand in many areas of the State's initiative.

New York's plan of action derives from the people and local governments along the Hudson River. It reflects the programs that the citizens of New York have directed the State to create, the ways in which they have elected to work together with each other and with the private sector, and the enormous strides they have made in reclaiming their River. Designation of the Hudson River as an American Heritage River complements these efforts by providing Federal assistance with voluntary, non-regulatory programs that will help restore the River and revitalize the economy of River communities while respecting private property rights and working in cooperation with local governments and non-profit organizations.

To implement this initiative, Governor Pataki has issued Executive Order Number 85, creating the Hudson River Heritage Council (HRHC). The HRHC consists of the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, who serves as chair, the Secretary of State, the Commissioner of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Markets, the Commissioner of Economic Development, the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation, the Chair of the Thruway Authority, the Chair of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and representatives of appropriate bridge authorities. By vesting responsibility for the implementation of the AHRI with key members of his cabinet, Governor Pataki demonstrated the State's firm commitment to this effort. The Governor also chose not to establish a termination date for the HRHC, ensuring that it will continue to serve the communities along the Hudson River for the foreseeable future.

Central to the implementation of the AHRI is the River Navigator for the Hudson River, assisted by the Federal Coordinating Committee (FCC). Representatives of several federal agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of Transportation, several agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Housing and Urban Development Agency are members of the FCC.

The Navigator serves as a bridge between the HRHC and the FCC, ensuring the effective delivery of State and Federal services to communities all along the Hudson River. These services may take the form of Federal grants-in-aid, technical assistance, and - in one key instance - the proposed donation of a parcel of Federal land to the State to complete the acquisition of a long-desired parcel.

Through the AHRI, the State and Federal government are able to focus the delivery of programs to the many small and large communities which abut the Hudson River. The AHRI has helped to breathe new life into projects to redevelop local waterfronts; ensure access to the River; and preserve irreplaceable open spaces and cultural resources.



## Future Challenges

The State of New York is excited about its many programs to improve and restore the environmental quality of the Hudson River and surrounding communities, as well as to revitalize their economies. In order for these activities, including the American Heritage Rivers Initiative for the Hudson River, to succeed, the State of New York advocates:

- More aggressive action by the FCC to implement the projects identified by the HRHC under the American Heritage Rivers Initiative. The State of New York strongly believes that the federal focus of the American Heritage Rivers Initiative at this juncture should be administrative, not legislative.



- Fully fund community grant programs that support economic development, historic and cultural preservation, and environmental protection and restoration, including grants for project construction. The State of New York does not support separating funding for American Heritage Rivers Initiative projects from other grants made to the states. To do so would only serve to splinter funds provided to the states and could result in the funding of projects that do not reflect the highest goals of the laws enacted by Congress.

- Congressional approval of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (H.R. 701). The State firmly believes that this legislation provides higher levels of funds, and greater long-term certainty, than the Lands Legacy or "CARA-Lite" legislation negotiated last year.

- Congressional approval of the Bush Administration's budgetary recommendation of full funding for the state-side Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The State of New York appreciates the advocacy that our Congressional Delegation historically has provided to the American Heritage Rivers Initiative. The State intends to continue its efforts with the New York Delegation to provide effective support for this program. In light of this commitment, however, the State wishes to note its strong opposition to legislation currently being drafted with respect to the Initiative. Legislation recommending the creation of a new 501(c)(3) corporation is poorly conceived and not in the best interests of this Initiative. We further object to the provisions of this draft legislation which would authorize funds for a Rivers Institute to be associated with Tulane University.







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## Hudson River Heritage Council Partners

### *Federal Coordinating Committee Partners*

- *Department of Agriculture*
  - *Natural Resources Conservation Service*
  - *Rural Development*
  - *Farm Service Agency*
  - *Forest Service*
- *Environmental Protection Agency, Region II*
- *Department of the Interior*
  - *National Park Service*
  - *Fish and Wildlife Service*
  - *U.S. Geological Survey*
- *Department of Defense*
  - *Army Corps of Engineers*
  - *U.S. Military Academy at West Point*
- *Small Business Administration*
- *Department of Transportation*
- *Department of Housing and Urban Development*
- *Department of Education*

### *Hudson River Heritage Council Partners*

- *NYS Department of Environmental Conservation*
- *NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation*
- *NYS Department of State*
- *NYS Department of Transportation*
- *NYS Thruway Authority*
- *NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets*
- *NYS Department of Economic Development*
- *Metropolitan Transportation Authority*
- *Hudson River Valley Greenway*
- *Hudson River Valley Conservancy*

### *Other Community Partners*

- *Scenic Hudson*
- *Camp, Dresser & McKee*
- *Hudson River Marine Trade Association*
- *Hudson Basin River Watch*
- *Hudson River Sloop Clearwater*
- *Hudson Boat and Yacht Club Association*
- *Hudson River Foundation*
- *Greater Adirondack RC&D Council*

